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ABSTRACT

This report by the Task Force on Evaluation of the National Advisory Council on Equality of Educational Opportunity (NACEEO) reviews, in detail, two works dealing with the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA). These two works present the cross-sectional results of the national evaluation of the Basic Elementary, Pilot Elementary, and Basic Secondary programs during the third operational year of ESAA; longitudinal results about the achievement of students in the national sample between the years 1973-74 and 1975-76; and results from the in-depth study of 26 elementary schools in 1975-76. This report to NACEEO deals primarily with: (1) summaries of the major findings of these two works, including their recommendations, and (2) a discussion of and recommendations related to those summaries. The Task Force on Evaluation recommends that NACEEO suggest to the Assistant Secretary of Education that studies be undertaken to provide more information about the processes involved in increasing achievement levels, about differential teaching actions between the ESAA and the non ESAA schools, and about the effects on achievement levels of grade repetition for students in elementary schools. The Task Force also recommends that NACEEO inform the Assistant Secretary of Education of the lack of school climate scales and of their importance to the nations' educational program, and request that steps be taken to ensure that this affective domain is evaluated. (Author/AM)

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REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON EVALUATION

of the

National Advisory Council on Equality of Educational Opportunity

22 - 23 August 1977

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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of the

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

as an action item

on

24 September 1977

Albuquerque, New Mexico

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force on Evaluation recommends that NACEEO:

(1) suggest to the Assistant Secretary of Education that studies be undertaken to provide more information about the processes involved in increasing achievement levels, about differential teaching actions between the ESAA and the non-ESAA schools, and about the effects on achievement levels of grade repetition for students in elementary schools; and

(2) inform the Assistant Secretary of Education of the lack of satisfactory measuring devices of school climate and of their importance to the nation's educational program, and request that steps be taken to ensure that this affective domain can be evaluated.

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REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON EVALUATION

of the

National Advisory Council on Equality of Educational Opportunity

22 - 23 August 1977

The Task Force on Evaluation of the National Advisory Council on Equality of Educational Opportunity (NACEEO) reviewed in detail (1) The Third Year of Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) Implementation (Coulson, et al., 1977), and (2) An In-Depth Study of Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) Schools: 1975-1976 (Wellisch, et al., 1977). These two works present the crosssectional results of the national evaluation of the Basic Elementary, Pilot Elementary, and Basic Secondary programs during the third operational year of ESAA; longitudinal results about the achievement of students in the national sample between the years 1973-74 and 1975-76; and results from the in-depth study of 26 elementary schools in 1975-1976.

This report to NACEEO from its Task Force on Evaluation deals primarily with:

1) summaries of the major findings of these two works, including their recommendations; and

2) our discussion of and recommendations related to those summaries.

We are particularly concerned about the implications of the study findings for educational programs and educational research.

SUMMARY

For technical reasons, the Basic Elementary sample was the only group yielding firm data on changes in achievement. In the third year of the ESAA pro-

gram, but not the first two years, the Basic Elementary sample showed improvement in achievement in both Reading and Mathematics, favoring the ESAA-funded (or treatment) schools over the non-funded (or control) schools. In this sample, the treatment schools had substantially higher per-pupil expenditures than did their control schools. The average increase in expenditures for treatment schools was about $400 or an increase of about one-third over the approximately $1,200 spent per pupil by the control schools. The treatment schools spent significantly more monies on reading and mathematics instruction and on intergroup and cultural enrichment activities than did the control schools.

Data for the third year of ESAA indicated that the majority of ESAA funds were allocated to the Basic and Pilot programs. These funds were generally funneled to the more educationally needy school districts and, in turn, to the more needy schools and students within those districts. Need was determined by student pretest scores on standardized reading and mathematics achievement tests. The percentile ranks of student recipients of ESAA funds were usually in the bottom third. Most of these recipients also belonged to lower socioeconomic families as measured by parental education and occupation and by a scale of luxury items in the home. Most of the ESAA funds were spent on basic instruction.

Perhaps due to differential stages of desegregation between the basic secondary and elementary schools, a positive relationship emerged between student achievement and activities promoting a favorable interracial climate in the secondary schools, while a negative relationship between these two variables was found for the elementary schools.

In testing disadvantaged pupils, concern arises that the test may not fairly reflect the pupils' progress. To minimize such a possibility, the System Development Corporation (SDC) carefully restandardized the test norms and analyzed the data on both the new scale and the original scale. The new analysis left the patterns of test scores and differences practically identical with that given by the original analysis. Thus, the original standardization and the restandardization left the interpretations unchanged. In Year Two, the SDC report had also found that the interpretations were the same under both scalings.

The in-depth analysis of 26 elementary schools selected from the top and bottom of the reading and mathematical rankings of 78 schools identified several variables which substantially affected student achievement. The major findings of this study are set forth below, as reported specifically by the Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation of the U. S. Office of Education (1977:5-6):

> Organizational Climate. The more successful schools had administrators who (a) felt strongly about instruction and communicated these views to teachers (through regular review and discussions with teachers), (b) assumed greater responsibility for selecting instructional materials and for planning and evaluating school programs, and (c) emphasized academic standards by reviewing teaching performance, by opposing postponement of basic skills instruction, and by requiring low-achieving students to repeat grades.
>
> Instructional Practices in Reading and Mathematics. Students were significantly more likely to gain in Mathematics when teachers (a) introduced a lesson by placing it in the context of previously-learned material, (b) praised students frequently and favored restricting rewards to desired behaviors, (c)

> used behavioral objectives and placed importance on setting challenging goals, and (d) emphasized behavioral objectives and individualized instruction. A similar trend was observed for achievement gains in Reading.
>
> Equality of Educational Opportunity. In schools placing greater emphasis on equality of educational opportunity, students were significantly more likely to interact without regard to race or ethnicity, minority-group students were significantly more likely to perceive teachers as treating them favorably, and schools that placed greater emphasis on providing equality of educational opportunity were more successful in raising student achievement.

The Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation of the U. S. Office of Education (1977:6) summarized the ESAA evaluation thusly:

> A three-year evaluation of the ESAA Basic and Pilot Project Grants programs indicates that, by the end of the third year, the program appears to be having some impact on student achievement. This impact was limited to the Basic Elementary sample. Conclusions could not be drawn about ESAA impact in the Basic Secondary and Pilot Elementary samples because similarities in patterns of expenditures between treatment and control schools indicated that for these two samples ESAA and non-ESAA students were receiving the same kind of education. Regarding program attributes /observed to be/ most effective, student achievement was higher in those programs where (a) there was strong administrative leadership behind the ESAA program, (b) instructional practices relied heavily on the use of behavioral objectives and individualized instruction, and (c) emphasis was placed on equality of educational opportunity. The program does not yet appear to be having any effect on student perception of school climate.

Overall, the results of the ESAA evaluation suggested that substantial per-pupil expenditures in needy schools for relevant instructional and related activities may foster improved cognitive achievement levels of needy students.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Essentially, two kinds of data are being reported on in the various analyses referred to above. One is the experimental results of ESAA itself. The second is not directly related to ESAA, but is concerned with better ways of teaching minority and disadvantaged students without regard to the funding source.

An apparent trend in the Year III report is a reemphasis on traditional values and behavioral modalities, including especially the classic roles of principals and teachers. Greater direct involvement of principals and teachers in the instructional processes, and greater emphasis on basic instruction seem to be related to success in teaching. Traditional instruction is observed to be associated with greater gains in academic achievement.

Spending money directly upon basic instruction to reach the objective of improving reading and mathematical achievement levels may be good. The ESAA evaluation studies provide little detailed information on the processes involved in increasing achievement levels.

Further analyses of existing data collected by SDC in the evaluation studies may provide some additional information about process. The Year III report suggested that program funding and program maturation were probably causal variables affecting achievement levels of ESAA students. About two-thirds of supplemental funds from all sources in the ESAA schools were spent on instruction in reading and mathematics.

The majority of these funds were expended on reading. We need to know what teaching actions these expenditures led to and how these differed from what was done in the non-ESAA schools.

The in-depth analysis of the successful and nonsuccessful elementary schools showed that the former were substantially more likely to have students repeat grades to meet academic standards. Administrators of the successful schools were also much more likely to stress traditional education. These results suggest the need for more information about relationships between achievement levels and grade repetition for students who normally would receive social promotions.

Therefore, the Task Force on Evaluation recommends that NACEEO suggest to the Assistant Secretary of Education that studies be undertaken to provide more information about the processes involved in increasing achievement levels, about differential teaching actions between the ESAA and the non-ESAA schools, and about the effects on achievement levels of grade repetition for students in elementary schools.

Measuring school climate to appraise the relation between children's perceptions of the educational atmosphere and their achievement seems a natural task in a large-scale educational study. In the Year III report, the authors concluded that the psychometric properties of their school climate scales were inadequate. The Task Force on Evaluation regards the measurement of school climate as important in studies of how to improve academic achievement. Therefore, it wishes

to encourage the development of satisfactory school climate scales for future use not only in studies of desegregation, but more generally.

Therefore, the Task Force on Evaluation recommends that NACEEO inform the Assistant Secretary of Education of the lack of such measuring devices and of their importance to the nation's educational program, and request that steps be taken to ensure that this affective domain can be evaluated.

Respectfully submitted by:

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